

Interview with DUGLAS PATTON
Interviewed by Betty King

Doug is an attorney and political consultant. He first met Marion Barry in 1968 at the Poor People's March in Washington. In 1971 they met again when Doug was managing Walter Fauntroy's campaign for Congress. Doug supported Barry in all his campaigns. When he became Mayor in 1979, Barry appointed Doug to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (1980-5) and the Lottery Board (1989). From 1976-1995, Doug was an ex-officio member of the Federal Election Commission. In 2016, he published his political memoir entitled *The White Guy in the Room*.

28 June 2016

BK: Today is June 28th, 2016. My name is Betty King, and I'm here talking to Doug Patton.

Thank you very much for participating in our oral history. Doug, when did you come to the District of Columbia?

DP: I came here to the District in 1965.

BK: When did you meet Marion Barry?

DP: I met Marion – I guess you would call me meeting him then – was 1968. He was with Pride [a youth training and employment program he founded] then. He wore dashikis. I always told him a story later on, I was actually literally scared of him when I met him because he was so threatening looking. He used to laugh at that all the time. Marion had certain naiveness about him. He says, "Really? Why are you doing that?" I said, "I don't know. You just kind of made me nervous." (Laughter.) So I told him that later on in life. So that's when I met him, '68. Did not know him –

BK: Under what circumstances did you meet him?

DP: I met him through Sterling Tucker, I believe. I was helping organize the Poor People's March, which I lay out in this one.

BK: And Sterling was head of the Urban League for the District?

DP: Yeah. He was head of the Urban League, and David Rusk, who I met Sterling through, was the deputy director. David Rusk was a great guy. I met him playing rugby. He was the son of Dean Rusk [US Secretary of State 1961-9].

BK: Who was the secretary of state.

DP: Yes, who was the secretary of state. And Marion was active then. I kept hearing about him. I think he came to the city in about 1966. It could have been '65. So we came in about the similar era. I knew him some then, and then I got to know him much better when I came back to the city. Then I ran [Reverend]s Walter Fauntroy's campaign along with John Wilson [Democratic leader, later City Council member], so I was the outside consultant. And Marion was very all out for –

BK: Now, this was in the campaign for?

DP: Delegate.

BK: For the non-voting delegate for [the US] congress?

DP: The first real election we'd had in the District was 1971, and so I saw a fair amount of Marion then. There were some stories that I could tell about that 1971 campaign, which I told a lot in my book, but there's a couple specific ones I can tell you about which I remember.

BK: If they had to do with Marion, sure.

DP: I remember one time, we were having – always problems raising campaign money. Max Berry [attorney and later chair of Finance Committee for Barry's 1978 campaign], my dear friend, came up with an idea that we were trying to get John Hechinger [prominent businessman and Democrat], who had some reputation as being a little tight with the nickels, to sponsor a meeting at the City Tavern Club in Georgetown. He said, "Well,

that way, John will have to come, and it'll put peer group pressure on him." So, we met there, and there were six or eight of us, Marion included, along with I remember Reverend David Eaton [Pastor of All Souls Unitarian Church] was a very prominent minister back then, and is a great person.

BK: From the Unitarian Church.

DP: Yes. And I kind of led it off. I said, "We need money in order to buy radio ads, so you've got to buy them in advance because you can't – you've got to have the money on the barrel." And everybody was kind of dodging and weaving. And all at once, Marion says, "Well, I don't have the money, but I'm going to get it, \$1,000." And David Eaton jived in and says, "I will too." And Marion says, "Even if I have to go borrow the money from the bank, I'm going to get it for Walter." And that kind of cowed everybody, because Marion was obviously the poorest. Second poorest was Reverend David Eaton, in the room. So we raised, at that time, big money, four or \$5,000 that day, and Marion was the person who made it happen. So that's what he was.

BK: That sounds like a Marion story. Indeed, it does. Did you work for Marion when he ran for the school board?

DP: No. I can't remember who he beat. It was a longtime incumbent. But I remember David Abramson, who was a good friend of mine who is now deceased, handled the advertising.

BK: Yeah, and he did in Marion's campaign in '78.

DP: Yeah, and in '78. That's how I got to know David Abramson and Marvin Himmelfarb, who did the spots for Walter in 1971. So I was living in New York, running campaigns in '74 or '75, and Connecticut, so I was out of the city a lot. And I came back, I was working for a union in New York – AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and

Municipal Employees]. Well-known union. I was getting tired of traveling, and I got a position, due to friends, on the Federal Election Commission representing the House of Representatives. So I would run, occasionally, into Marion, just socially, kind of. And one day he called me and he said, "Doug, I'd like to meet with you." I played dumb, which is easy for me. He said, "What's convenient?" I says, "Well, my house is most convenient. It's private." So he shows up, appointed time, believe it or not.

BK: That is amazing.

DP: We sat in my kitchen. I asked him if he wanted a drink. I can remember this precisely. He says, "Well, maybe I'll have a beer." So I probably was drinking something else, I don't know. So he proceeded. He says, "Well, I need your help. I'm going to run, and I need your support. But more importantly, I want you to co-manage this campaign with Ivanhoe Donaldson."

BK: Now, this was which campaign? The first campaign for the city council?

DP: This was 1978 election.

BK: Not '76 or '74?

DP: No. He said, "I need you to co-manage this campaign with Ivanhoe." He said, "You know Ivanhoe." I said, "Yeah. Not well, but I –"

BK: I can't imagine anybody co-manage anything with Ivanhoe.

DP: Well, I was smart enough to figure that. But interesting. I just had this important job at that time. I was representing the House of Representatives on the Federal Election Commission.

BK: Yeah. You were for many years, right?

DP: Yeah. And so, I wasn't out to do another campaign. He argued with me for a bit. I said, "First of all, you may have watched this with John Wilson and I co-managing Walter's, because you had one black and one white. You don't need that, Marion." I said, "Plus, that worked, but barely." I said, "You need one campaign manager, and Ivanhoe is sharp enough and good enough to run it." So I talked him out of that. That took about a half hour. We were back and forth. He said, "Okay." I said, "Plus, I just took this other job. The money isn't there, to be quite selfish about it." And I asked him some other questions. I said, "I'm going to support you, Marion." And I think he was a little bit taken aback that I was, because he knew I was good friends of Sterling Tucker [who also ran for Mayor in 1978], and had been. And I said, "No, Sterling's never come to me."

BK: Never came to me either.

DP: He didn't? Yeah. So we talked for probably a good two hours about various things, issues, policy, not about staffing. I talked about messaging. I always ask this, but, "How are you going to win?" And I don't think at that time Marion knew how he was going to win. And then he was getting ready to go and I says, "I have one final question for you." "Well, what's that? What's that?" I said, "You know, I was always around a lot of meetings with your then-spouse, Mary Treadwell." And I said, "I got the distinct impression she did not like white people. And I'm going to ask you, since you were married to her, did she dislike white people?" And Marion (unintelligible 00:10:13) back and he says, "Well, let me put it this way, Doug. Mary didn't like a lot of people." (Laughter.) I said, "That did it." We both high-fived each other, and that was it. You ever heard that one?

BK: No. That's great.

DP: Some of these, I tell in my book. Some, I don't. Then we proceeded to –

BK: So, during the campaign in '78, did you have a role?

DP: No official role. I had a fund raiser at my house. I was single then. I think I raised maybe \$7,000, which was an amount then. Pretty good amount.

BK: Yeah, very good.

DP: Then, as you remember, every two weeks or every week – I can't remember precisely – we met on Saturdays. What was there, ten or twelve of us? Fifteen. Ivanhoe chaired it. Marion was there as a rule, but I don't think all the time.

BK: Probably not.

DP: Yeah. And very good meetings. I remember Jan Eichhorn [campaign issues staff member] was there. I can't remember all. I named some in the book, but I couldn't remember everybody. I think Sybil was there – Hammond [doing scheduling for campaign]. And Phil Ogilvie [also issues staff], I think, was. So it was kind of a – oh, what's her name, out of –

BK: Kay McGrath [issues staff]?

DP: No.

BK: Florence Tate [press secretary]?

DP: No. I'm trying to think.

BK: Black or white?

DP: She's black. Very important woman out of, I think, Ward 7. Lorraine Whitlock [Ward 7 coordinator in 1978]. She almost always came.

BK: Oh, yeah. She was like a mother to him. I mean, she was very strict with him.

DP: Oh, yeah. She would – “No, you aren’t doing that, Marion.” (Laughter.) So we met every two weeks. I remember I had one of the meetings at my house. We’d kind of alternate. We always met in somebody’s house. I may have had one or two meetings over the course of the time. Not that Marion was involved, but I do remember Ivanhoe, we had a meeting at Max Berry’s house. Yeah, Max use to come to these too.

BK: Well, Max was the finance chair.

DP: He was the finance chair or treasurer. I can’t remember.

BK: I can’t remember who the treasurer was.

DP: Anyway, I’ll never forget it. Stuart Long [attorney and restaurateur] came to some of these. He started coming at the last. And we had one of these Saturday meetings at Max Berry’s, and Marion had left. We’re all sitting in the kitchen and Max said something. There was a story in the [*Washington*] *Post* about this director of elections, who was not that swift, quite frankly. I can’t think of his name. But Ivanhoe got quoted, and it wasn’t a good quote, like, “This guy ought to be thrown out on his ear.” You know, something. And mildly, Max said something, and I sort of jived in slowly. I said, “Well, I wouldn’t have handled it that way,” and Ivanhoe went berserk on us. “Don’t tell me what the hell to do.” And we’re like, well, no, we’re just conversational mode. (Laughter.) He got our attention. It’s the only time I really saw Ivanhoe erupt. I guess he erupted a lot of other times. He never did with me, except that one time. But so, anyway.

BK: Well, sometimes he didn’t want to be confused with the facts.

DP: I know. (Laughter.)

BK: But, listen, he was a brilliant strategist.

DP: Oh, yes. And hard worker, too.

BK: Oh, God, yes.

DP: He just, frankly, didn't suffer fools gladly, which was fine with me.

BK: Well, on the afternoon of the primary, you were in the basement of headquarters.

DP: Yes.

BK: And I was feeding you the numbers that were phoned in, how many people had voted in each precinct, and you were doing some magic to forecast what we should do during the last hours of the primary.

DP: I can remember that. I described in the book, I got a first realization of how complex Marion was. In fact, Courtland Cox [Barry supporter] came down later in the day, was with me, because he was kind of fascinated what I was doing. But I had done targeting and precinct targeting for years, and I was probably trained in early '64 by a guy named John Culver. Actually, Dick Clark, who also became a US senator. Dick was really a mechanic. He understood. He was like Ivanhoe, but he knew numbers and how to do his – so I learned that business on targeting by precinct, and then it was perfected even more when we did Fauntroy's race in '71. So I kind of knew the city. So we did the numbers, and we knew it was close. I mean, I knew it was really tight three-way race between [incumbent DC Mayor] Walter Washington and Sterling. I'm getting my elections confused. But I got them all, everybody had cut out, and I was there getting the last numbers. And Courtland said, "I'll see you up there," at that –

BK: At Harambee House.

DP: That was Harambee House. I said, "All right. I'll drive up." Or I got a ride. It was late. So I got up there and I had, I think, the figures with me. And I said, "Where's Marion's suite?" because I hadn't really asked. I went up to his suite, and I can remember, I

walked in and there was this big outer room and there sat, I remember Dave Abramson [who did advertising for the campaign], and Max Berry. And I'm figuring, well, why are they sitting out here? And I said, "Well, where's our victor?" They kind of pointed, I guess he's in there. There was an adjoining bedroom. I went over. His door was closed, and I kind of knock on the door, timidly, and some person pulls it open who I didn't recognize. I said, "I'm Doug Patton." And I heard somebody in the background, "Let him in," or something like that. I guess it was Marion. I came in and there was Marion sitting on the bed along with Effi [his wife] and about eight or ten other people, none of which I'd ever seen before in my life.

BK: Really?

DP: Never seen any of them. Including Ivanhoe. He wasn't there. And I went over to Marion. I think he was kind of in a daze. He was just obviously tired. I walked over to him, and he was sitting. I said, "Marion, you won, regardless of what anybody said. You have won. Do you understand?" "Oh. Oh, yeah." (Laughter.) Unconvincingly. And I repeated it, and I looked around, and people were looking at me, kind of. I said, "This is a strange group."

BK: Did you ever find out who the people were?

DP: No, I didn't. I turned around. There was one guy in there, was – I can't think of his name. I sort of half recognized. I found out later he was a probation officer for somebody or had a respected position. I turned around. I was tired, anyway. By then, it may have been midnight.

BK: Oh, no. It couldn't have been, because it was announced earlier than that.

DP: Yeah, maybe it was ten o'clock or nine.

BK: Probably.

DP: Maybe it was 9:00, 9:30, even. I just knew I was tired because I had been up, and I just turned around and left. Didn't even stop. I said goodbye to David and I went home. Then I thought, Marion's got all these circle of friends. You would have thought Dave Abramson and Max would have been in the room, at least.

BK: That's curious.

DP: I'm very curious.

BK: Well, I'll tell you, when Marion and Effi came down to the ballroom – it was a modest ballroom – and there was a platform there, and they were up on the platform, and Marion called his campaign staff to come up, we had to fight our way through people that we had never seen before.

DP: Oh, yeah. See, I've been through those scenes, and they're all the same. And not just for Marion. Always the same.

BK: "You're my man. I've been with you from the beginning."

DP: Right. (Laughter.)

BK: The fact you haven't seen me is immaterial.

DP: Oh, yeah, that's always the scene.

BK: So maybe that's what was going on in his bedroom.

DP: With the exception of this one person, I didn't recognize anybody else. Like, I knew (unintelligible 20:23) was a good –

BK: Did you tell Max that Marion had won, Max and Dave?

DP: I think so, when I went out.

BK: Because late at night, I came upon Max and Dave sitting on the floor in the hall outside of the big room at the Harambee House, and Max grabbed my skirt and said, “We didn’t really win, did we?”

DP: Did he really? (Laughter.)

BK: I think he was slightly pissed, and he really couldn’t believe it. We pulled it off.

DP: You’re never completely sure, but I was about 95 percent sure that we won it. So that was that.

BK: Yeah, Phil Ogilvie was over at the counting station, phoning in.

DP: Yeah. I think, yeah.

BK: Yeah, he was the one who was the expert on that.

DP: We also had a whole group – I can’t remember, because I get the elections a little – because we had to do the same thing in ‘71. Because we had a similar kind of tight race between Fauntroy, Channing Phillips, and Joe Yeldell [the three candidates for Delegate in 1971]. But Fauntroy won that with 44 percent of the vote. This one was like 33.1.
(Laughter.)

BK: But Phil Ogilvie was over, probably with some other people, monitoring the count and so forth. There were lots of problems back then. You know, always missing ballot boxes –

DP: They’d fall off the trucks.

BK: – that were found, and, you know, stuff.

DP: But I just, what I had is on the numbers was enough that I thought Marion had it.

BK: Well, I think I realized what you were doing with the stuff I was giving you, but it just seemed like magic to me. How can Doug Patton figure out what’s really going on just from my telling him how many people voted in Precinct 3?

DP: Yeah. Well, it was the trends, and it was always the key precincts. And I always knew, I had done an analysis of who I thought Sterling was going to do well in, and who Walter Washington was going to do well in.

BK: Then after the campaign, in subsequent elections, did you work for Marion at all, in '82 or '86? Do you recall?

DP: Yes, I did. Yeah, I had a fundraiser for him in '82, and I raised money for him.

BK: When he ran against Patricia Roberts Harris?

DP: Yeah. I raised money for him, and I worked somewhat actively in '82. Then in '86, I didn't do as much. I think I had one fundraiser. I think I always had one fundraiser at our house, and that's when Nancy [my wife] got to know him.

BK: Well, that was a great summer.

DP: Yes.

BK: Really interesting summer.

DP: What was the other story I was going to tell? Maybe if you want to shut it off, I'll think of that, so I don't waste the tape on it.

[Break in recording]

BK: Here we go. We're on.

DP: I mentioned who I just talked to yesterday, actually. Sterling Tucker's now ninety-two years old.

BK: I know. Do you think he'd talk to us?

DP: He might. I wanted him to come tonight [to my book party], but he's got a conflict. He really wanted to come. On Sterling, there was aspects of the '68 Poor People's March and the riots I wanted him to read, which I took to his house and he read it. He says,

“Doug, you’ve got it down. It’s correct.” But so, this was the Saturday night before the primary, and friends of mine – you probably remember it, Betty. It was Pisces.

BK: Oh, God, yes.

DP: It was the big nightclub on M Street.

BK: It was brand new, and we had several things there.

DP: Yes.

BK: We did something for Rosalynn Carter in ’76 [during President Carter’s campaign], as well.

DP: Yeah. I remember one night, after some meeting, Dave Abramson and Marion and I had dinner there. I can still remember, for some strange reason. But this was the Saturday night before the election. And friends of mine says, “Why don’t you join us, Doug? We’re getting a bunch of us together at ten o’clock at Pisces.” I used to go there. My roommate at that time, or previous, was a member, so he just said, “Go in under my name.” So I was cheap with money, so I just – but I walked in. I walk up and there’s six or eight of my friends, both men and women, and sitting almost in the middle was Sterling Tucker. Now, I’m thinking, what’s he doing here with a bunch of white people, half of which were probably Republicans, on a Saturday night when the election’s Tuesday? And I’ll never forget that. I was there two hours, two and a half hours. He was there all the time. And somebody was trying to needle me, and they – sitting next to Sterling and he says, “Well, what do you think, Sterling, about your good friend Doug supporting Marion Barry instead of you?” And Sterling said, “Oh, it was one of my biggest surprises and disappointments.” And I wanted to say, “Well, you never asked me.” (Laughter.) I mean, it’s a cardinal rule.

BK: It's absolutely.

DP: And he never did.

BK: He had never asked me either. He sent people to ask me for him, but he never asked me.

DP: No. That was the great thing about Marion. Marion came out all the way, Cleveland Park, where I was living. Took time. There was no hurry.

BK: Oh, absolutely. Yep. No, he liked asking people, and he liked nothing better than getting somebody who had never supported him before and didn't like him particularly to come over to his side.

DP: I can remember – this is post-'78 – and I wanted, or somebody pushed me, I wanted to be on the Board of Zoning Adjustment, because I looked at all positions. And somehow, I got – I can't remember, but there was a woman named Connie Fortune.

BK: Oh, yeah. I remember Connie. [A Barry supporter from the Gold Coast in Ward 4].

DP: She got appointed ahead of me.

BK: During Marion's administration?

DP: Uh-huh.

BK: But that would have come through my office, and I don't remember you ever applying.

DP: Well, I was backed off it by somebody, said that's already spoken for. And I told Marion, because I didn't know her – and then I got appointed, when was it, in '80?

BK: Were you on the BZA?

DP: Oh, yeah, for a long – yeah, afterwards, then it came up again, another position. Maybe even Marion told me that. I can't remember. Leonard McCants, I do remember, had the position, and he had been a longtime supporter of Sterling, and Marion wanted him off. I

got his position. So I don't know, Connie Fortune, whose role she played, but I was a little peeved at it. Not a lot.

BK: I don't recall ever hearing that that was something that you wanted. It would have gone to Marion for a decision from me if I'd ever known about it.

DP: Well, somehow somebody told me – I can't remember – that it was already spoken for. I just remember. But this is the story I want to tell. So Marion was doing other people, and I said, "Well, that person didn't support you," or I'd say certain person. And he looked at me, he says, "Doug, come on. In this business, there's no permanent friends and no permanent enemies." (Laughter.) I said, "I get it."

BK: There was a lot, a lot of bad feelings when he appointed people to jobs or positions on the boards and commissions who had not been with him before the primary.

DP: Exactly.

BK: I mean, when I presented the list to him, we had a code, which was WBBTP, which was "With Barry before the primary," to indicate people who – you know, just in case he'd forgotten. But that was our code. Otherwise, all the names, anybody who applied went on the list to Marion and he made the decision. Even for things like the plumbing boards. I mean, I would make recommendations and so forth, but, you know, he made up his mind. But if your name had – if I, who handled that, had known about it, you, of course, would have gone to Marion and it would have been his decision to make it. But I can't imagine who told you to back off.

DP: I can't remember at the time. But I do know Connie Fortune –

BK: Got it.

DP: Well, she got it, but she had also been a supporter of Marion's.

BK: Oh, yes. No, there was no question. Yeah, Connie was.

DP: And I served with her and I really liked her.

BK: No, she's a very good person.

DP: I don't know if she's still alive.

BK: I served on the BZA when I retired from government for three years.

DP: You did? I didn't know that.

BK: I left in a blaze of glory, writing the only dissenting opinion that had ever been filed with the BZA.

DP: Really? What years was that then?

BK: I went back into government in '94. It was when I left. It must have been '97, '98, '99.

DP: Really?

BK: There was an opinion on the new GW [George Washington University] Hospital, which I thought was insane. The Traffic Department, the transportation –

DP: I handled – no, that would have been 2000, I handled a BZA case for the Pedases, Jim and Ted.

BK: As a lawyer, you mean?

DP: As a lawyer. And it was outrageous what BZA did. They didn't follow the law or anything.

BK: I know. Well –

DP: I mean, it was just – I was speechless.

BK: Yeah, I was stunned. And of course, this has nothing to do with this particular oral history.

DP: Who else was on it? Right, I know. I should get off that.

BK: Now, you continued to be friends with Marion. Was there any sort of break in the relationship?

DP: Oh, yes.

BK: At which point?

DP: I can tell that story. Marion's popularity, particularly in Ward 3 and certain parts of the city, went down.

BK: Oh, yes. After '82, it was history.

DP: We were going to Vail to ski. It was around Christmastime. Before Christmas. And I get a call from Kay McGrath and she's having a coffee thing at her house, and Marion was going to come. And she said, "I need you and Nancy there because I don't know what this crowd's going to be like. They may be very antagonistic." When was that? I have it in my book. I forget all the dates. But anyway, it was right before Christmas. And I said, "Okay. We're leaving tomorrow." And I told Nancy, so we went over to Kay's house, and there's thirty-five, forty people. And questions were very specific of Marion. You know, locations. And he was just profound. They'd ask a very specific question, where this street was, and garbage wasn't being picked up. Oh, yeah. He just rattled it off, one question after another.

BK: He was brilliant.

DP: I mean, he was just sharp.

BK: But the fact was that he really knew the stuff, because he lived it night and day. I mean, there was no question he couldn't answer.

DP: Yeah. And there was something, it was some drug policy we were trying to get on, compulsory drug testing. I can't remember. That was '89, so I don't know why I was

involved with it – a friend. I’d talked to Sterling about it. He said, “Well, talk to Marion.” And I asked Marion, I said, “Can I see you for a second off a side room?” and we went. I said, “This policy –” and he said, “I’m all for it, Doug. I’ll be the first one to be tested on a compulsory –” I said, “Oh, great.” I turn around and go back. So we’re driving home, and there has always been this talk about “drug activity by Marion.” And Nancy – I think I said it in the book – she said, “That’s just hogwash. No one can be that sharp and answer all those questions and have any drugs in their system.” (Laughter.) I said, “You’re right.” So we go skiing, come back, fly into Dulles.

BK: Oh, Vista Hotel.

DP: Driving back, and then we heard the Vista Hotel. And Nancy and I look at each other and say “What the – gosh.” So I guess it had been true.

BK: Yeah.

DP: And, follow-up. So you ask about a break. So it was a real disappointment, a friend. So he went through all that thing with the trials, and I just didn’t see him. Then one day, Bill Lucy [international Secretary. -Treasurer of the Association of State County and Municipal Employees], who’s a dear friend of mine, said “I think Marion wants to run.”

BK: Great guy.

DP: And this was after [Mayor] Sharon [Pratt Kelly] was in, and [City Council member] John Ray was going to get in. And I says, “You know, I think I’ll support Marion.” And Bill said, “Really?” Lucy. He said, “Well, you ought to meet with Marion.” So I get a call from Marion, here another meeting. We meet at the Washington Hotel, and he starts talking. I said, “Marion before you get started, I’m going to support you, so let’s just talk about other stuff.” (Laughter.) And we just had a great lunch. He was like relieved. So

he gets out. In that time, I had a driver from the Hill, Roger, I'll never forget, was picking me up. He was African American, great younger guy. And we come out to the car and Roger says – he's looking at Marion like he's a rock star. And I said, "This is Roger, Marion." "Good to see you." Roger's all glassy-eyed. He takes me back to the Hill for a meeting. And I says, "Had you met Marion before?" He says, "You know, Doug, he probably kept me out of jail. I got one of those summer jobs." See? Never forgot it.

BK: No. When he died, the funeral was full of people who said the same thing, "This man saved my life."

DP: Yeah, this man saved Roger's life. Anyway, that was Marion. I think I tell that. The other human interest story I tell, it's not related to the '78 campaign, but it's a follow-up. My father passed in – this was '89, so this is all during that period before. I was out in Iowa. That's where my parents lived, Independence, Iowa, a town of 7,000 people. My father passed. I hadn't been around the Wilson Building [DC city hall] or Marion much, because he was ill that year, and I spent a lot of time back and forth.

So, the phone rings one morning at my mother's house. Mother says, "Can you get that?" And I pick it up. And like Marion usually, sometimes he mumbled a lot, and – (mumbles). I said, "Well, who is this?" Then he says, very distinct, he said, "It's the mayor, Doug. Marion." I said, "What a surprise." It's 7:30 in the morning, which was 8:30 in DC. And he said, "I was just asking people, I hadn't seen you around." He said, "Then I found out your father died." He said, "I'm just paying my respects, Doug. I feel bad." And we talked for thirty seconds more, and I said, "I won't hold you up. I really appreciate it," hung up the phone. Now, to this day, I cannot figure out how they got my

parents' number in Independence, Iowa. I never asked him that. I always kept forgetting to ask.

BK: For many people, I was his source of phone numbers, but I wouldn't have known that. But Pat Seldon [Barry's Executive Assistant] would have gotten it for him from somebody.

DP: Yeah, I knew Pat pretty well, so she probably figured out who –

BK: Yeah, she probably called the FEC or something.

DP: Yeah, probably did something. I'm sure they did the due diligence, but I was just amazed. Also, try to explain people when they'd have these anti-Marion stories, I said, "Let me tell you another part of Marion Barry that you may not have seen or experienced," and that was the part.

BK: Quite aside from what he did for the city, he singlehandedly built a middle class when there wasn't.

DP: Yeah, wasn't any.

BK: Black middle class.

DP: Black middle class. They just didn't.

BK: No, and I mean, he was wonderful.

DP: The day he passed, I was – there's two hours' difference in Colorado. I've told a couple of people that. The phone rings at 5:30 our time, which is 7:30 out here. And the phone was ringing. Nancy and I, it woke us both up. And I said, "I don't know who – it must be – don't answer it." Then, thank God for – I said, "Who was it?" She said, "It was Tim Chapman," who was a client and friend of mine, who also knew Marion well. I said,

“It must be something, because he knows there’s two hours’ difference.” So I called him back in about ten minutes, and the first thing he said, “Marion died.”

BK: Yeah. It was a terrible shock.

DP: I broke down crying. I had to hang up on him. It mean, it was just such a ripple. The thing is, Betty, I spoke to him the day before, twice.

BK: Really? How did that happen?

DP: I introduced Tim to him years before. We were working on an affordable housing project in [DC Ward] 8, and he was really pushing it. It was a mixed housing. And so, that’s when I was on the phone. I mean, that would have been done within a month or two if he had lived. We were getting close. So I was just amazed.

BK: Has it come to pass?

DP: Not yet.

BK: Will?

DP: I think so. It’s a good project. It’s not worth going into, but she doesn’t know how to make anything happen.

BK: Yeah, he’s a sad loss.

DP: Sad loss.

BK: I mean, he had his demons, and we who loved him all knew about that. But God, in the balance there was so much more good than there was bad.

DP: Then he was a councilman – I didn’t tell this in the book. I told basically positive stories about him. And this is kind of a positive, too. Anyway, I had to see him about something, and it was 1:30, 2:00, and I had already eaten lunch. He said, “Well, let’s go over to the hotel,” the Marriott down at – he said he hadn’t eaten something, and he ate

light. For the next hour and a half, he told me, in vivid detail, the Vista night, and her.

Hour and a half. It's more than I ever wanted to know. I mean it's true it was from his perspective, but I couldn't get away. He wanted to tell it. I felt like I was Father Patton, you know, a priest, listening to confession. (Laughter.)

BK: Oh, dear.

DP: So, he had the detail.

BK: A tragedy.

DP: Another thing I didn't know about Marion, I took him to, we went up on the Hill, my club called the 116 Club.

BK: Oh, I've never heard of it.

DP: Well, we didn't let people know about it, the public. They always had the best crab cakes on the East Coast. Still do. And I told Marion. He said, "Well, when are you going to take me?" I said, "When you're ready, let's go." So I took him up one day, and of course, he walks in. He was mayor then. Mayor again. It was the second time.

BK: The fourth term?

DP: Yeah. And people were just in awe. This is basically – it isn't now, but at that time it was probably 80 percent white. And Marion was like, you know. But it's typical Marion, he recognized one or two people in the club, came up to him. I mean, it was hard keeping people from coming up. And then at the end, he says, "I need to go back in the kitchen." Because all the help in the kitchen was black. He went back, and he was back there ten minutes, comes out of the kitchen. (Laughter.) But then I said, "Marion, something I was always – was your memory. How'd you get that?" He says, "I think, Doug, my memory was trained when I almost got a PhD in chemistry." He said, "I had

to memorize all those formulas. That's the only way I could do it. So I think it trained my brain to do the memory." It was interesting. Had you ever heard that? Did he ever tell **you** that?

BK: No, he never did. But he had an amazing memory. Total recall, almost.

DP: Total recall, yeah. Oh, this just happened last night. So, I'm giving my – the East City Bookstore on the Hill, and there were twenty people, twenty-five. And there was a guy named John Callahan showed up. I hadn't seen John for five years, at least. He used to work for me. And he got done, he says, "I've got to tell this. It's not a question, but I've got to tell it." Because I mentioned Marion. Somebody asked me a question, who was the best and worst politicians? I said, "Well, the two best I observed, and one of them I was a lot closer to, and may strike you as surprising, was Marion Barry and Bill Clinton."

BK: They're the same person.

DP: They're very similar. Same person. Their memory. I mean, Bill Clinton's memory was phenomenal. It was the same thing. And people said, yeah. So then John found us. He said, "You know, only twice in my life, I met Marion. I was with you. We were at something east of the river. One night, you took me along, and then another night it was something else. I met him briefly." He said about a year before he died, he ran into Marion at Safeway somewhere, and he says, "John, why aren't you with my friend, Doug?"

BK: No.

DP: And John was like –

BK: Amazing.

DP: Amazing. And John says, "I was speechless." I mean, here's – (Laughter.) Isn't that wild?

BK: Isn't that wonderful? Yeah, it was amazing. Well, it's been a great interview. Thank you very much, indeed.

DP: All right. I hope I added something.

BK: Oh, you did indeed. Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]